

ISDA gets a handle on invasive aquatic plant at two sites

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

The Idaho State Department of Agriculture and its partners are winning the battle against the invasive aquatic plant Hydrilla at two sites.

Eradication of the plant, which reproduces easily and can grow an inch a day, will not be proclaimed until sites are free of the plant for 10 years after it was last found. It can lie dormant for that long.

But the countdown is underway in Owyhee County after crews did not find Hydrilla plants in the Bruneau River in 2021 following 12 years of work.

It has been nearly seven years since the plant was found in a north Boise project area.

"We'll continue to monitor and survey," said Jeremy Varley, noxious weeds section manager at

the Idaho State Department of Agriculture. "In weed control, there is no silver bullet."

Hydrilla and other aquatic invasives can reduce water quality and impede the delivery of irrigation water.

"There's a real-world impact on the ability to grow crops and raise commodities," Varley said. "Water is paramount, and when invasive species hinder that, many ag producers feel it when their water can't be delivered."

"And invasive plants decrease biodiversity, which leads to a plethora of other negative ecological impacts," said Bethany Muffley, noxious weed and invasive species program specialist with the department.

The perennial Hydrilla plant fragments and produces tubers. After upper vegetation dies at the end of the growing season, the tuber remains in sediment



Brad Carlson/Capital Press

Jeremy Varley, Idaho State Department of Agriculture noxious weeds section manager, and Bethany Muffley, noxious weeds and invasive species southwest region ag program specialist, view reports on Hydrilla plant declines in a Bruneau River project area.

and will regrow when conditions are favorable.

"One fragment can undo an entire season's worth of work," Muffley said.

Work on the Bruneau River included chemical applications and mechanical and biological removal.

Divers used a dredge-like system. Non-reproductive triploid grass carp, held in ponds to eat uppermost vegetation at sprouting, were placed in consultation with Idaho Fish and Game.

All modes were used from 2010 to 2012. Chem-

ical usage ended in 2012. Crews that year began seeing individual rooted plants rather than dense monocultural infestations.

Monitoring and removal efforts increased in 2013 and steady decreases materialized two years later.

Since 2015, "we've surveyed the same places over and over," Muffley said. Going back to where Hydrilla plants had grown is important because "with tubers left behind, there is a high probability of regrowth."

The Bruneau River project area covers about 14 miles, from Hot Springs down to C.J. Strike Reservoir. She said the biggest concentration of Hydrilla was in the upper 5 miles, where geothermal springs enter the river.

A U.S. Bureau of Land Management employee partnering on the Bruneau project during surveying

at the end of 2007 said the same plant was seen in a north Boise backyard.

The Boise population was confirmed as coming out of a geothermal ditch. That water flows into a canal and back to the Boise River.

Hydrilla was likely introduced "as an escaped aquatic hitchhiker in a shipment of tilapia received by a local aquaculture hobbyist who was using the geothermal water for fish propagation," a state Department of Agriculture report said.

Muffley said Hydrilla was found in 400 meters, just over 437 yards, of the geothermal ditch. Removal was by hand only.

Recent findings included 208 plants in 2013, 101 in 2014, seven in 2015 and none from 2016 to 2021. Crews check the area twice a year.

Both projects involve multiple agencies and landowners.

New CPOW president: Wolves, water biggest concerns for Washington ranchers

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

Wolves and water remain the biggest concerns for ranchers, the new president of the Cattle Producers of Washington says.

"Those are what could cripple our industry the quickest," Josslinn Schoesler told the Capital Press.

CPOW supports the control or eradication of any predator that endangers or negatively impacts the livestock industry, or the people involved in it, Schoesler said.

CPOW also wants to protect agricultural exemptions already in place.

"Ranchers do not need a water right so that their cow can drink from the creek, pond or the river," she said. "That's been in place since the 1960s. We need to keep those exemptions in place."

A rancher raising more than 300 head of cattle, Schoesler was elected president of the organization in January.

Schoesler said her priorities are to protect the interests of the state's cattle ranchers and restore prosperity to rural Washington.



Josslinn Schoesler

CPOW's founding members in 2004 formed the organization to preserve and promote beef bred, born and raised in the state.

She's been ranching her whole life, she said.

Her parents are ranchers Dave and Julie Dashiell, and Washington Sen. Mark Schoesler is her father-in-law.

"My grandpa gave me my first cow when I was not even in school yet," she said. "I've always had cattle and continue to run cattle with my husband today."

They winter in Ritzville, and summer in pastures in Lincoln and Adams counties.

The people involved are her favorite part of ranching, she said.

"They're just good, salt of the earth people," she said. "They're not afraid to work hard every day, and when things go wrong, they're there to help."

When Schoesler and 22 other ranchers were affected by the Whitney Road fire

near Davenport in September 2020, followed by drought in 2021, they received donations of hay, protein supplements and fencing supplies, she said.

"We're not the type to ask for anything, but it was amazing to see the support," Schoesler said. "Just a great network of people. They show up when you need it."

Schoesler said she finds the most hope in the fact that so many people are willing to volunteer to support the industry.

"It's just the satisfaction of knowing you're helping keep a tradition alive," she said. "That's all it takes. This is a lifestyle that is wonderful, and it needs to continue. Unless people are willing to volunteer, it's going to have struggles."

Schoesler felt it was "brave" of CPOW's founders to break away from other groups in 2004.

"I felt a responsibility to continue what they started," she said of accepting the presidency. "We're here to help where we can. I'm just here to keep it going."

Schoesler will serve a two-year term, with the option to serve for another term.

EPA, Army Corps plan regional roundtables on WOTUS

Capital Press

The Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Department of the Army will have 10 regional roundtables as they continue to work on the waters of the U.S. rules under the Clean Water Act.

Participants will represent diverse perspectives.

The agencies will work with each roundtable to facilitate discussion on implementing WOTUS while highlighting regional differences.

The agencies will host the roundtables online during the spring and summer.

"EPA and Army are committed to listening to all sides and working to foster a common-ground approach to WOTUS that protects our environment and is informed by the experience of those who steward our waters day-in and day-out," Radhika Fox, EPA assistant administrator for water, said in a press release.

"Through these regional roundtables, we will work toward a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities to enhance WOTUS implementation to support public health, environmental protection, agricultural activity and economic growth," she said.

The agencies are "committed to gaining a better understanding of the various regional perspectives through

these roundtables to develop an implementation approach that accounts for these diverse voices and regional variations," said Michael L. Connor, assistant secretary of the Army for civil works.

"In addition, the Army hopes to identify implementation considerations and tools that could assist in effective, consistent and efficient implementation across the nation," he said.

The 10 roundtables will include the following groups:

- Amigos Bravos (Southwest).
- Arizona Farm Bureau (Southwest).
- Cahaba Brewing (Southeast).
- California Farm Bureau (West).
- Kansas Livestock Association (Midwest).
- Natural Resources Defense Council (Northeast).
- National Parks Conservation Association (Midwest).
- North Carolina Farm Bureau (Southeast).
- Regenerative Agriculture Foundation (Midwest).
- Wyoming County Commissioners Association, Montana Association of Counties, Idaho Association of Counties (West).

The agencies most recently concluded a public comment period on the proposed rule to re-establish the pre-2015 definition of WOTUS, updated to reflect consideration of Supreme Court decisions.

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